

escape from gravity

Irregular bulletin of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts

No. 6

SPECIAL INTERGALACTIC CONFERENCE ISSUE

MOVING IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE !

A spectre is haunting the planet, the spectre of independent, community-based space travel. The Association of Autonomous Astronauts (AAA) is the most important space exploration program active in the world today, and unlike other organisations that claim to escape from gravity (organisations that are infact paralysed by their own inflated sense of self-importance) the AAA has demonstrated the possibilities of well-planned assaults against the state, corporate and military monopoly of space exploration.

With the third anniversary of its official launch, the AAA can reveal the specific phases to its Five Year Plan for establishing by the year

2000 a world-wide network of local, community-based space exploration groups. Phase One — the launch of the AAA's space exploration program. Phase Two — declaration of Information War against government-funded space agencies throughout the universe. Phase Three — the Dreamtime, a collective process of exploring the possibilities that open up when we form autonomous communities in outer space. Phase Four — a period of consolidation, during which Autonomous Astronauts examine the achievements that they have made so far. Phase Five — the final push into the year 2000. The Bologna Intergalactic Conference, April 18-19 1998, marks the beginning of the fourth phase of the AAA's Five Year Plan, its CONSOLIDATION.

AUTONOMOUS ASTRONAUTS OF THE WORLD

Since the launch of the AAA on April 23rd 1995, Autonomous Astronauts have not been content to merely destroy the state, corporate and military monopoly of space travel. AAA groups have also succeeded in exposing the belief systems adopted by those who attempt to dismiss the AAA as a so-called 'serious joke'. These idiots not only 'believe' that the AAA cannot possibly 'really' succeed in its aims, but these buffoons also 'believe' that words have fixed meanings, and in this way are therefore inextricably linked to the maintenance of the status quo regarding space travel. The AAA has developed space exploration as a language game that moves in several directions at once, and so shown that anyone can use words to imagine and create their own possibilities. Words can be used to subvert the commonly held view that space travel requires vast amounts of money, and language has been set in motion by the AAA as part of a vast collective fiction that concludes with the creation of a world-wide network of AAA groups all dedicated to building their own spaceships. To the AAA there is no difference between 'fact' and 'fiction' as they exist within independent and community-based space travel.

The AAA has already demonstrated how it can influence events through a process of morphic resonance. As more and more people find out about the possibilities of independent space travel, it becomes easier for others to also become aware, so that the AAA's ideas have an effect on those who may not even know of the AAA's existence. Following from this, it seems that in retaliation against the AAA's Information War on government-funded space agencies, the US military have conducted tests with the MIRACL (Mid-Infrared Advanced Chemical Laser) based at the White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico. These tests, carried out in November 1997, used the MIRACL, which has a beam about six feet wide, to fire on an orbiting satellite in an attempt to destroy it. Predictably, the US government justified these tests by insisting that they need to control who has access to satellite information in times of war. However, the AAA is convinced that the true motive behind these tests is the threat posed to the state, corporate and military monopoly of space travel by the possibilities of independent, community-based space exploration as represented by the Association of Autonomous Astronauts.

At the Vienna Intergalactic Conference in June 1997 the AAA ran workshops with a group of Austrian teenagers collectively designing and building a WorldWideWeb site. This project began with the participants travelling to the future to squat the abandoned Russian space station Mir. The group then sent a report back to planet earth about its experiences aboard the Mir in the form of a web site. Subsequent events on the Mir throughout 1997 have confirmed the AAA's propaganda efforts. The various problems on the space station have de-mystified space exploration for a great many people. The Mir has been continuously patched together by its various crews, and this has enabled the technology to be thought about in a more down-to-earth way, comparable to how people relate to a second-hand car that needs constant attention. The events on the Mir have also revealed the arrogance of government space

agencies in allowing their astronauts to be so badly prepared for difficult situations. For example, when a computer failure on the space station led to a power shut-down that plunged the crew into cold and darkness for several hours, why had no-one remembered to pack a torch with spare batteries, as well as several extra thick jumpers for warmth? Anyone who has ever been camping back on planet earth will know the importance of being prepared for these kind of emergencies.

The Vienna Intergalactic Conference formed part of the Dreamtime phase to the AAA's Five Year Plan, and also enabled the AAA to involve local communities in the process of exploring the possibilities that open up when we go into outer space. Prior to the conference, the AAA had ran a highly successful spaceship building project with groups of Viennese school children. Another fascinating discussion that has emerged from the Dreamtime has concerned dress codes for a proposed intergalactic rendezvous on the moon. The SHITS (SkinHeads as Independent Travellers in Space) demand a 'sharp' attitude towards clothes, and have even accused some Autonomous Astronauts of being too 'shaggy' in their approach to fashion. In response, other AAA groups, including the Disconauts, have proposed space suit designs for future raves in space that include glamorous additions like sequins and fake fur. What has emerged from this debate as it relates to the AAA's Dreamtime has now become clear — Autonomous Astronauts will not go into space dressed in the dreary uniform worn by government sponsored space travellers.

By concentrating on how space exploration technology is used and who has access to that technology, the AAA has escaped both scientific rationalism and its mirror image, romanticism. The AAA has done this through a collective Dreamtime process, a playful and speculative exploration of the possibilities that open up to us when we form autonomous communities in outer space. And unlike utopianism (in either its rational or romantic forms), the AAA has unravelled the threads that run throughout history to create an organisation that never has any recruitment problems, since anyone is encouraged to get involved by simply starting their own AAA group. As an expanding network of independent, community-based groups the AAA has transcended the bureaucratic forms of organisation adopted by all other space exploration programs.

No-one can now write a history of space travel and neglect to include the contributions of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts. It is the declared aim of the AAA to ensure that all future discussions of space travel will understand how the AAA has revealed the contradictions created by the development of space exploration technologies. There will be increased exploration of space, and the AAA is determined that this will not be inextricably linked to the expansion of capitalism. The AAA confirms that we can go into space, not as conquerors of the universe, but as a collection of independent, community-based groups dedicated to building their own spaceships. Autonomous Astronauts of the world, move in several directions at once!

MOVE IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE !

WE HAVE A WORLD TO LEAVE BEHIND !

'My Lord, we are Four or Five, some say Honest, others Foolish, but all say Drunken Fellows, now drinking Your Lordships Health at the Tavern; and our Poetical Inclinations are all attended with Poetical Pockets. Some of us have Six-pence and Eight Farthings, some neither Eight Farthings nor a Sixpence; so that the chiefest of our dependence is upon the strength of this Dedication. And since the Majority of Us are too dirty for Your Levee, we have pick'd out the nicest Spark of us All, to make this present by.'

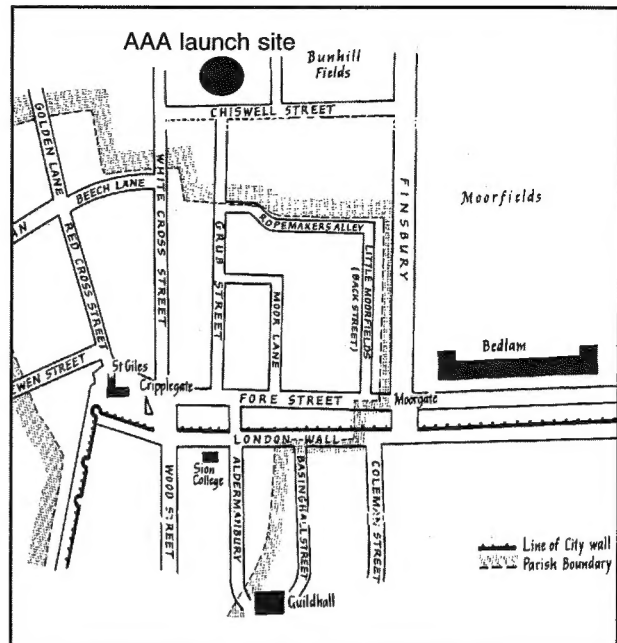
Tom Brown — Petition to the Earl of Dorset
(Miscellanies Over Claret, 1697)

London offers many possibilities for inner city space exploration programs. As a city composed of startling contrasts and diverse zones of experience, London inhabitants use urban space in a variety of ways, not all of which are sanctioned by the authorities. London continues to observe a multitude of everyday conflicts, including the Association of Autonomous Astronauts' own explorations into sex in zero gravity, raves in space and games of three-sided football. With this in mind, Inner City AAA have conducted an intense series of researches into the psychogeographical qualities of various London sites, and we are now able to announce that our first launch pad has been successfully located in Grub Street.

'Grub Street' entered the language in the 17th Century and became a household phrase in Hanoverian England, a metaphor for the seamier side of life. Grub Street was a place of filth, clutter, noise and squalor, home to crowds of sharpers, thieves, beggars and harlots. Then, following the lapse of the Press Licensing Act in 1695, scores of printing presses based themselves in the area, accompanied by the writers that could now hope to make a living from their newly established profession, no longer having to depend on the patronage of aristocrats.

Grub Street came to be associated with the literary hacks that lived and worked there throughout the 17th and 18th Centuries. The huge increase in publishing fed the growing appetite of a predominantly middle-class reading public. But this rise of a publishing industry also increased the availability of politically subversive texts, broadsheets and pamphlets that were largely self-published and that created a dynamic within society still present today. For example, the various conflicts over the idea of free expression on the Internet can be traced back to the antagonisms created by the culture of Grub Street.

The denizens of Grub Street created an atmosphere of sedition and revolt, of combat with the forces of law and order. Grub Street lay just outside of the old medieval city wall, and had always been a space beyond the control of city authorities. Milton had once lived in the area, and in 1830 Grub Street was replaced with its present-day designation as Milton Street, in an attempt to clean up its popular image as a place of non-existent morals, distinct



above: map of 18th Century Grub Street and its surrounding area indicating the location of Inner City AAA's launch pad

street life and hang-outs for disreputable writers. These ghosts still remain, and Inner City AAA have reclaimed the cultural heritage of Grub Street in order to refuse the Victorians their sanctimonious cover-up.

We have located our launch pad at the northern end of Grub Street, in an empty and derelict square that lies several feet beneath road level, and forms part of an abandoned building that was a former college of higher education. Our seizure of this space demonstrates the AAA's tactic of taking whatever we can find and making our own use out of it. In addition, this specific site, a former educational establishment, is used to reflect the AAA's attitude towards the organisation of knowledge within western culture. The AAA has resisted intellectual specialisation by promoting transversal approaches that combine different and diverse ways of thinking.

Much of the original Grub Street has been swallowed up by the Barbican, a huge complex of luxury flats, art galleries, cinemas and a library. Our Grub Street launch pad is also near the financial centre of London, the square mile that forms a nerve centre for capitalism. By situating our launch pad here we have deliberately put ourselves in close proximity to the very culture that we intend to destroy by building and successfully launching our own spaceships. Despite the number of surveillance cameras in the area, our games of three-sided football have confirmed that the authorities are not equipped for preventing us from using this site as our chosen launch pad.

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Grub is derived from the old english word 'grube' meaning a drain or ditch. Close to Grub Street a tributary stream had ran to the notorious Fleet Ditch near Holborn. These ditches were used for hundreds of years as sewers by local residents. Even dead bodies could be found dumped in these disgusting waters. Even though this water has long since been concreted over, our investigations have shown that it still flows beneath our launch site, and we have already begun exploring ways of tapping into the psychic energies associated with underground rivers. These forces will assist our plans for independent space exploration, and help us as we continue to generate a huge underswell of activity that connects with our network of groups dedicated to developing strategies for escaping gravity.

Grub can also refer to a maggot or worm that is able to infest a larger body, and digest it from the inside out. Our Grub Street launch site is also then the ideal spot for plotting further media invasion campaigns. This element to our space exploration program aims at planting ideas within a variety of contexts, ideas that are able to resist the filtering techniques applied by commercial publishers and broadcasters. As these 'idea grubs' penetrate the thick flesh of the media, the concept of independent, community-based space travel is taken and used by people who may not even know of the AAA's existence.

The culture of Grub Street contributed to the development of satire as a weapon against the prevailing order. Inner City AAA has located its launch pad in Grub Street in order to continue these Grubbaen tendencies, and to make satire a tool for community-based space exploration. But whereas in the 17th and 18th Centuries Grub Street and its libertine persuasions existed as a physical location in the geography of London, the forces of social control have since then significantly developed their own strategies for coercion. Now Grub Street must be reclaimed, not only by locating our launch site here, but also as part of a geography of the imagination, as a Grub Street of the mind that combines semiotic terrorism, self-confessed propaganda, information warfare, comical devices, cultural sabotage and a wicked, twisted sense of the absurd.



Conferenza Intergalattica

Association of Autonomous Astronauts
the Link Project, via Fioravanti 14
Bologna, earth

April 18-19 1998

contact the AAA for travel
and accomodation info.
(email: jason@artec.org.uk)

Phase Four CONSOLIDATION message transmitted to Bologna Intergalstic Conference April 18-19 1998

The Association of Autonomous Astronauts (AAA) move into the fourth phase of their Five Year Plan for establishing a world-wide network of local, community-based AAA groups. This phase is described as the CONSOLIDATION, during which Autonomous Astronauts examine the achievements that they have made so far and prepare for the final push into the year 2000.

The AAA has conducted a highly successful and meticulously planned campaign against the state, corporate and military monopoly of space exploration. Autonomous Astronauts now require a period of intense reflection, time to gather themselves together and analyse all that has happened to them. This important phase of consolidation marks a critical moment in the Five Year Plan, the point at which AAA groups decide how they will proceed into the final stage of the AAA's evolutionary project.

The Bologna Intergalactic Conference will bring together AAA delegates from around the world to present reports from their local, community-based space exploration groups. The conference will also expose local communities in Bologna to the possibilities that open up when we form autonomous communities in outer space. Moving in several directions at once, the AAA has declared, 'Only those who attempt the impossible will achieve the absurd'.

Subscription — send four first class stamps to receive the next four issues of 'Escape From Gravity' to:

Inner City AAA,
BM Jed,
London, WC1N 3XX.

Donations to our space program are gratefully received.

There is a great field of people around the AAA who are somehow ready for space travel but who aren't trying to do it. People project their hopes on the AAA or write a letter asking how they can join. It isn't like that; it's about forming a group yourself.